



**For Immediate Release
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**Contact: Wendy Fox
617-626-1453**

**STATE CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING FOR \$8.5 MILLION
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AT HORSENECK BEACH**

WESTPORT—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan, Jr. joined Representative Michael J. Rodrigues and Senator Joan M. Menard today for a groundbreaking ceremony at Horseneck Beach State Reservation. The groundbreaking marks the start of construction of new bathhouses at the Reservation, part of an \$8.5 million capital improvement project, scheduled to be completed in June 2009.

“DCR is charged with the challenge of providing the public with an opportunity to actively recreate in very fragile habitats, such as this popular barrier beach,” said Commissioner Sullivan. “This new design will improve DCR’s ability to manage this facility in a safer and more environmentally sound manner, as well as providing many new amenities for visitors.”

“I am very pleased that work has at last begun to improve the quality of Horseneck Beach,” said Representative Rodrigues. “I am very proud to have been able to secure funding that will allow Horseneck Beach to remain the natural resource jewel of the SouthCoast.”

“Horseneck Beach is one of our most beloved natural resources on the SouthCoast,” added Senator Menard. “These capital improvements will ensure that this will remain so for years to come.”

Established as a state park in 1957, 10,000-foot-long Horseneck Beach is one of the most popular public swimming beaches in Massachusetts, sometimes attracting as many as 15,000 visitors in a single day. Composed of shifting sands, barrier dunes, and buffering salt marshes, the beach is also important from an environmental standpoint.

Two new bathhouse buildings (one each in the East and West parking lots) will replace the single existing bathhouse in the central plaza area, increasing the number of toilets overall and distributing them at both ends of the beach. The bathhouses will feature new sand rinse stations that replace indoor showers, and will incorporate composting toilets, which together are expected to reduce water use at the facility by at least 50 percent.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston MA 02114-2119
617-626-1250 617-626-1351 Fax
www.mass.gov/dcr



Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lt. Governor

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary, Executive
Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Commissioner
Department of Conservation & Recreation

The new bathhouses will be raised to allow for sand migration, which will improve the health of the beach's dunes. Lighting, ventilation, building materials, and waste disposal systems are all designed with conservation in mind.

During construction, the beach will offer approximately 200 fewer parking spaces than the usual total of 2,800, as the space is needed for construction staging areas. DCR officials suggest that visitors call ahead to the Horseneck office, at 508-636-8816, to make sure parking is available; the reduced number of parking spaces is expected to have the greatest impact on hot weekend days. Alternative DCR ocean beaches in southeastern Massachusetts that beachgoers can visit during the construction at Horseneck include Demarest Lloyd State Park in Dartmouth and Scusset Beach in Sandwich.

Future phases of the project, the first major renovation in the Reservation's history, include the construction of a new beach services building and the installation of new utilities. The new beach services building will house a modern, more efficient park administration headquarters area, lifeguard facilities, a first aid station and additional public restrooms.

Additionally, DCR plans to replace a significant amount of pavement area with pedestrian amenities such as pathways, shade structures and plantings in the vicinity of the new bathhouses.

Recently completed dune crossing boardwalks were designed for easier beach access, as well as to reduce erosion and allow the beach to self-nourish. Boardwalks will also protect flora and fauna in the dune area, such as the population of endangered piping plovers, which nest at the state reservation.

Once the improvements are completed, the entire beach area will be more accessible to visitors. All buildings and boardwalks will be universally accessible in accordance with federal standards. The new design increases the handicapped parking area and drop-off areas, also placing them closer to the beach and more central to park facilities.

Design work for the capital improvements was done by Stephen Kelleher Architects and Weston & Sampson Engineers. The bathhouse contractor is Builders Systems, Inc. of Auburn.

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